

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Irene Cockett Perry

*"We'd stay with my [great-]grandparents [in Pālāwai], maybe several months. . . . They'd have a . . . sweet potato patch and we would go and work in the potato field. We would help harvest. And then we would do our laundry. My mom had to take all the clothes and we would take five-gallon cans, put all our clothes in there. And we'd take it down to almost to the piggery where they had troughs for the water for the (animals). And we would do our laundry there. At that time, that place was full with pāninis. And the pānini plants were, I would say just as high as this ceiling."*

Irene Cockett Perry, younger sister of Mary Cockett Kalawaia, was born April 15, 1917 in Keomuku. Her father, Robert Cockett, was a foreman for Lana'i Ranch in Keomuku. Her mother, Rose Kahikiwawe Cockett raised the children and tended watermelon and pumpkin fields. Irene fondly remembers visiting her great-grandparents in Pālāwai before the area was cleared for pineapple production in the 1920s.

Irene attended Keomuku School until 1928, when the family moved permanently to Kō'eale. She then attended Kō'eale Grammar School, completing the eighth grade.

In 1934, she married Dick Perry, an employee of Hawaiian Pineapple Company, and eventually raised two daughters. From 1936 to 1957, she worked at Hawaiian Pineapple Company's employee childcare center. She opened Irene's Doughnut Kitchen in Lana'i City in 1951, shortly after Dick's death.

After spending a year on the Mainland, Irene moved to Honolulu and worked for the Moana Surfrider Hotel. She retired in 1981 and returned to Lana'i.

Irene lives in Lana'i City. She enjoys lau hala weaving and other Hawaiian craft activities. She also is active with Ka Lokahi O Ka Mālamalama Ho'omana Na'auao O Hawai'i Church, Lana'i Hospital Auxiliary, and the Lana'i Senior Citizens.

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW  
with  
Irene Cockett Perry (IP)  
January 22, 1989  
Lāna'i City, Lāna'i  
BY: Mina Morita (MM)

MM: This is an interview with Irene Perry at her home in Lāna'i City on Sunday, January 22, 1989. The interviewer is Mina Morita.

IP: . . . we'd do that [in Keōmuku] and then Saturdays we'd go out and catch fish and we'd bring home. And we would eat some fish and dry (some) for the winter months. That was fun because we kids (would) go in and swim and splash water so that the fish would run into the net (chuckles).

MM: Who taught your mother [Rose Kahikiwawe Cockett] how to fish?

IP: She lived with my [great-]grandparents at Pālāwai and she had to go with him to fish.

MM: That's Tūtū [David and Makaimoku] Keliihananui?

IP: Yes, Tūtū Keliihananui. And she [mother] lived down Keōmuku, too, down by Naha.

MM: Lōpā side?

IP: Lōpā, around that area. Because she talked about living down there. She would show us the place when we'd get on horseback and come up and visit her tūtū down Pālāwai. She stayed there for a while. She must have been born there. And that's how, I guess she had to go out and fish for the family, too. So, she did most of the fishing. We'd go out Saturdays and do that. But Lloyd [Cockett, IP's brother] used to catch more of our fish. Just about every day he would be out catching lobsters and crabs and all that. He was always there.

MM: So like for a typical day for you folks, like you mentioned you had chores, what kind of chores did you do?

IP: (Chuckles) We had to go out in the kiawe and pick up little twigs. Three different sizes, we'd get. We'd put it all in one box, and then we'd get the little bigger branches, and then we'd get the

bigger ones and we'd carry that home. We'd pile it up in little bunches and then take them home and we'd store it for the winter. Every week, we'd go out and get enough for . . .

MM: Firewood.

IP: Firewood, and we'd bring them (home) and we'd stack them up. And then we had to do the (rest of the) chores. It was cleaning house and we had to help clean the lau hala. When there (was) plenty of lau hala, we had to go and help pick, the children from around there, all their families with all their children. The older ones, like the ones that can do the gathering of the lau hala, we'd do that, and the older ones would maybe strip the kukūs. And so that was our job. We'd pile, gather in bunches, tie them up and then stack down there.

MM: Who would weave, your mother? Your mother would weave?

IP: Yes, and then later, when we get all those and come rainy time, you know, the time when can't work outside, then the ladies would get together and clean the lau hala and soften them and put them in pōka'a.

MM: What is pōka'a?

IP: Pōka'a is rolls. After they strip them, get out the thorns, and then they kind of rolled it up to soften the lau hala and then they rolled them. And then they make (them) a little round, and they put them all together and make them about that big.

MM: Probably like a foot and a half wide . . .

IP: (Yes.) So it's called pōka'a. When that's all done, they get together and they weave. I don't remember seeing my mother weave a hat, but I know she weaved mats. She'd weave matting. All the ladies, like the Kahaleanus, and I think Cousin Hattie [Kaopuiki] all get together and they make it a nice time.

MM: Did you folks sleep on lau hala mattresses? Or use lau hala mats.

IP: No, not at Keōmuku. We had nice match cotton. I don't know what they call that, but anyway, we had those. So we didn't. But, I remember whenever we came up to visit Tūtū Keliihananui [in Pālāwai], they had a back room, they had this bunk. You know, wooden planks and then they put this mattress on, and inside they had all this fibrous things. Must be lau hala shavings or whatever, I don't know, but it's all stuffed. It's not cotton. So, must be one of those that you talked about. But in Keomuku we had nice mattress. I mean, the old kind, but it was nice and comfortable.

MM: Yeah, nice cotton ones.

IP: Yes, nice cotton ones, they were comfortable. We'd go to church on

Sundays. We'd all get together and go to the church down there, Ka Lanakila [O Ka Mālamalama] Church. And whenever they would have something big, maybe a convention, they would make a party for the church. They'd get together and make cakes. All the ladies would make cakes. No measurements, you know, they'd dump flour and eggs, and just get going. And boy, I used to love to watch them mixing up their cake.

My mother used to make hers at home, if she's not with the ladies. Then when she gets through, I'd go get an empty coffee can cover, and I would take the batter and I would make my own batter, dump some eggs and flour just the way she did (chuckles). And I would put it in this coffee cover, and I'd stick it in the oven. And at the end, it would be like pancakes.

(Laughter)

IP: I would love to do that. What fun.

MM: What other kinds of chores did you have?

IP: We'd clean house and rake lau hala, and summertime, before then, we used to plant watermelon. And, of course, Rebecca [Kaopuiki Richardson] them had their place up in Ka'a. And they'd have their patch and we would have a patch right in Keomuku, right in the back where the big windmill is. And after school, or on a Saturday, we'd get together and we'd go up to the different places that needed to be weeded. Because they (would) get together and plant [watermelon]. When that's growing and the vine starts getting longer, we had to go and peg them, because the wind (would) blow on the vines, and then it ruins the plant. So we'd go and wind the vines and take sticks and we peg it down so that it won't get tossed around. And we would do that for this family and then we'd go to the next watermelon patch and we would do that. And then when the watermelon was ready to be shipped to Maui, we'd go and gather the watermelons. The parents would get the (ripe) ones ready and then break (them) [off] and put (them) in piles. And then the children used to have to carry them to the beach, so that (they) could be put on the boat and sent to Maui. One time I went and we had a nice crop that year. Big ones. Watermelons were that big, you know. And they were sweet, sweet like sugar, and red inside. One time I went, they passed the watermelons down, and just where our place [was] we had a fence that you had to cross [in order to] go down to the beach. And I took this huge watermelon. I had to do it. I had to carry it (by myself). My mother said it was too big [to pass down] so I carried it. And as I was going to put it down to open the gate, I dropped it. And, ah, it was a feast. All the kids came running. We all forgot about the watermelon and dug into it.

(Laughter)

MM: That wasn't on purpose?



- IP: No, no, no. It was so 'ono. Anyway, that's what we had to do, all the kids, you know. We all worked together, the families worked. It was really close, real nice.
- MM: So, besides your family, what other families were there?
- IP: We had the Kahaleanus and we had the Japanese, Nishimura. The younger brother. There was Susumu, he was the oldest.
- MM: And then there was Tsuneo . . .
- IP: And then Shigeo [Jimmy]. There was the younger brother. I remember the younger one. (His name is Shigeto.)
- MM: Younger than Jimmy?
- IP: Yes, he had a brother younger than him [Shigeto]. That's just about the only kids that was down there then. (Also, the Kahaleanu children, Joe, George, Mabel, Katherine and Ben.) And, of course, Sam, you know . . .
- MM: Sam Kaopuiki.
- IP: Kaopuiki children. But they lived in Ka'a. We'd walk and go up and see them, and play with them.
- MM: So did you go to school at Keōmuku, too?
- IP: I remember there was an old school, a big schoolhouse. But I never went to that school. I remember peeking in through the window. I think my sister Mary [Kalawaia] went to that school. But I didn't. I don't know what happened. I don't remember whether they broke it down.
- MM: Oh, I guess I was told that that school was broken down and another one rebuilt.
- IP: Rebuilt. I remember that [old] big one, but in between I don't know what happened. But anyway, I remember the new one, the nice, small school that was built right below [the old one]. And from the school, the windows, you (could) look down into the ocean, you (could) see Maui. Really nice. But, it got you away from your studies, because you're thinking of going to the beach to swim. I went to school and I started in first grade, and I was in the first grade for I don't know how many years (chuckles). Because we would have teachers come over to Lana'i. Haole teachers [who saw] just nothing over there. They would come and stay about a month or two months and leave. I was in the first grade, and when the teacher came back again, I was still in the first grade. And not much you learned then because there was first, second, third and fourth [grades], you know, and the older ones. But I think she gave more of her time to the older ones. But, anyway, I was only in the second grade when we moved up to Kō'ele in '28, I think.

[Mary Cockett Kalawaia, IP's sister, says that the family lived in Kō'e'ele for part of the time between 1922 and 1928.]

MM: Why did you folks make the move from Keōmuku to Kō'e'ele?

IP: I don't know. My sister Mary said something about they were thinking of closing out on the ranch.

MM: Keōmuku side?

IP: Keōmuku side. They weren't having the cattle [graze] down there anymore. They were only having [cattle] up this side, Kō'e'ele.

MM: Yeah, they cut down the men some.

IP: They cut down the men so we were all to come up. So they got my father [Robert Cockett] up and then he took over the old [ranch] store over there. I remember when we came up [to Kō'e'ele], there was the store. And my dad had to do all the store bookkeeping. In fact, he took care of everything.

MM: I guess in 1928, Mrs. [Helen Jean] Forbes left.

IP: That's right. Mrs. Forbes was there. I remember Mrs. Forbes was there. But was Mrs. Forbes taking care of the . . .

MM: The bookkeeping and the store.

IP: Bookkeeping and the store?

MM: Uh huh. So did you folks live in the house that she lived in?

IP: Yes, we lived in that house and my father was doing the bookkeeping and tending to the cowboys that did the work outside. And I think [James] Kauila was the foreman, for the outside work. And we'd go and ring that bell. Did they tell you we had that bell for this store, and that every Friday, once a week, they would open in the evening. I think it was something like three to five, and they would ring the bell, then people would come with their bowls or whatever for their poi? And they would have these huge barrels of poi. They would get over there and one guy would scoop it up and put in your container.

MM: Did you help in the store?

IP: No, I didn't. I was too small then. I mean, my dad didn't let us. I wish I had been able to.

MM: You helped ring the bell. (Chuckles)

IP: But I helped ring the bell sometimes. We'd wait for that day and then we would ring the bell. We'd go in to get some things, but I didn't help (with) the selling or anything. My dad would do all of

that and people would come and get all their groceries. Then he took care of all of (the bookkeeping).

MM: What was the biggest changes moving up from Keōmuku to Kō'elee? I mean did you folks have to go through an adjustment?

IP: Oh, I don't think so. (Chuckles) Anyway, but we moved up. We got our things by boat. I think our things came through Kaumalapau [Harbor].

MM: I think the [Kaumalapau] Harbor was open.

IP: It was open (by) then. It came down that way. And we got off [the boat] and we wanted to come up to the city, to Kō'elee. So three of us kids, we were going to walk. We thought to ourselves, we were going to walk. And they said, "No, you have to get on the truck," those big trucks with those big hard tires.

So we said, "No, we'll walk."

So they said, "Okay, you folks walk."

So we walked up and we walked and we walked and then finally, we sat down and waited for the truck to come. And they said, "You folks not going to walk?"

"No, where we going?"

(Laughter)

IP: He said, "You got a long ways to go." So we got on the truck with all this piled up ukana. So we came all the way up. Oh, if we walked we would have died.

(Laughter)

IP: So we got up and I don't think there was much change. Not for me. I missed Keomuku more, though. I just loved going out to the ocean for a swim whenever you wanted to and to just sit on the beach and enjoy. So, when we got to Kō'elee, I missed all of that. But, the friends that were down at Keomuku moved up (too). We were there together and then we got to meet a little more of the people up here. But for me, Keomuku was the best. I just loved it, even if you were much to yourself and all, but there was so much that you could do and enjoy. We'd go crabbing and a little fishing, even if you don't get much, and pick limu and all that.

MM: So when you folks moved to Kō'elee, were you still going to school then?

IP: Yes, when I got up here, then we started school. I was put right to the sixth grade.

- MM: Okay, and where was, that was the one at [where the present Cavendish] Golf Course clubhouse [is today] . . .
- IP: Kō'ele [Grammar School], that was the one at the golf course. So, I started in the sixth grade and, boy, I did have a hard time. But it wasn't too bad. It would have been worst for me if my dad didn't help us with our schoolwork. Because we didn't have much at Keomuku. Like I said, I was in the first grade until I was six or seven. Only when I came up, I went to the sixth [grade] and I must have been about eleven then.
- MM: Do you know anything about the school that used to be by the reservoir?
- IP: No, I don't. (Was) that the old, old one?
- MM: Yeah, apparently they moved the school from Pālāwai up to Kō'ele.
- IP: That's what I heard. That's the one my sister went to.
- MM: [Annie] Mikala [Cockett Enfield]?
- IP: Mikala. She said that there was a school that was moved and they were up there. Was it by the reservoir or further over?
- MM: Like in the gully.
- IP: Oh. The only (place) I remember up that side was the principal's home.
- MM: I think further below that.
- IP: Where Hannah [Richardson] them lived, wasn't that a school?
- MM: Okay, that's the school that was down below. [The schoolhouse that eventually became the home of John and Hannah Richardson.]
- IP: Oh, that's the school my mother said she went to.
- MM: I see.
- IP: And Mikala said she had gone to that school, I think. That must have been the one. But I don't remember that one. But when we came, somebody else was staying in that house then. Do you know when they built that school at the golf course?
- MM: No.
- IP: I don't know, too.
- MM: I have to figure out (chuckles). [Kō'ele Grammar School was built in 1927.]

IP: I went there till the eighth grade and I left and I got married. Never went back to school (chuckles). Too bad. My dad was going to send me to Kamehameha School. But we had my cousins staying with us, Joe Keliihananui, and he had sent him to Kamehameha instead. So I lost out. But, that's okay (chuckles).

MM: Tell me some more about your [great-]grandparents in Pālāwai. How often did you used to go and visit them?

IP: Not too often. Only when (my mother) got worried, maybe they're not well.

MM: Your mother would go?

IP: My mother, yes. But Moana was saying that we would come up and go to school here. Her grandparents weren't too well, so we came up and stayed with them. So we would come from Keomuku. We would go on horseback down Kahalepalaoa side and come up to that area where they lived. They used to live right down by Pālāwai, that white [water] tank up on the hill? Right below there. Right in that back hill.

MM: So it's before you reach that pigpen area, then, huh?

IP: Which pigpen?

MM: The pig farm that they had. The piggery.

IP: Where?

MM: Down Pālāwai. That's closer to Mānele side, so they would live more up toward the city side, then.

IP: You mean the pigpen where Patsy them have now?

MM: No, where they're fixing up right now. Where Dr. [Nicholas] Palumbo used to live?

IP: Oh, you're talking of that pigpen. Yes, before you get to the pigpen, on the mauka side, right by the foot of the hills. It's not too far from the piggery. Anyway, we would come on horseback, and like Lloyd said, my mom would get the he'e from the horse. I remember that because I was with her one time and we were coming up. And on the way, when the tide is low, she would go with the horse and I would sit, and she would see the squid and poke it. And you could feel the tentacles climbing up. She'd just stick her hand in the bag and that would loosen up [the tentacles]. So by the time we got down to the end of that area to go up to the hills, sometimes she'd get a good-sized squid. And we'd come down. It would take us a long time, though, more than an hour. I would say about two hours by horseback, maybe longer. And we would come up to their place. We'd bring fish or whatever we had. We'd stay with my [great-]grandparents, maybe several months. And we would stay with them and my mother would help him. They'd have a potato

patch.

MM: Sweet potato?

IP: Sweet potato patch and we would go and work in the potato field. We would help harvest. And then we would do our laundry. My mom had to take all the clothes and we would take five-gallon cans, put all our clothes in there. And we'd take it down to almost to the piggery where they had troughs for the water for the (animals). And we would do our laundry there. At that time, that place was full with pāninis. And the pānini plants were, I would say just as high as this ceiling.

MM: Oh, over ten feet?

IP: Oh, yes.

MM: Or fifteen feet?

IP: You think this is about fifteen? And they were huge and there were so many. We'd go to this trough, and you know where the petroglyphs are? Well, over there, around that, used to have lots of rocks. Find one rock. And then they would get the water from the trough in those cans and take them to the rocks and then we'd wash all our clothes. Just imagine, all that work!

MM: So at your [great-]grandfather's place, there was no water?

IP: We had water, but it was for drinking. They had a big tank and when it rained, we'd get all that rainwater. But there wasn't any running water. So we would go out where the trough is and use the water from there.

MM: What did your [great-]grandfather used to do?

IP: I don't know. At the time he wasn't doing anything. I think he was retired. (Chuckles)

MM: When you knew him he was about how old?

IP: Ah, gee, he was quite old.

MM: In his sixties?

IP: No, I think he must have been in his seventies or eighties, I think. Because he would walk around with his cane. And he wasn't doing much. He couldn't get around and do much. Tūtū Man must have been about eighty and Tūtū Lady, maybe about in the seventies.

MM: How did they come to live over there? Because most of the people seemed to be living down Keomuku side.

IP: Living down Keomuku.

MM: Or Kō'e'e.

IP: I don't know, but there were several families down that end.

MM: Oh.

IP: Because there was this George, what's their last name, Kahooalahala?

MM: Mm hmm.

IP: I think they, Aunty Nami, I think they would come. I think they had a place down there.

MM: Oh, Makahanaloa?

IP: Makahanaloas, I think they had, and there were some others down there, so I guess they all got together. But my tutu were further up. My mother said there were several families down that end where we went to do our laundry, you know. And so, maybe they were the group up here and some stayed down Keōmuku.

MM: What kind of house did they have?

IP: They had a nice old shack, a small one, small building, something like . . .

MM: A regular wood building?

IP: A regular wood building. Something like my garage out there. (MM chuckles.)

MM: A real small one.

IP: Just a tiny one, just one room.

MM: Yeah, it looks like about ten [feet] by ten [feet]?

IP: Yes.

MM: Your garage?

IP: Yes, just about. And this one was maybe just a little bigger, but the same shape. And then on the side, they built another extension without a floor, you know, just the hard earth, but just the cooking area. They had that with the iron roofing.

MM: And they had a wood stove?

IP: And they had wood stove. We didn't have anything else but wood stove.

MM: Besides sweet potatoes, what else did he grow down there?



IP: All I remember was sweet potatoes when we were there.

MM: Do you remember how he got any of his foodstuff or his poi?

IP: Well, the food would come from down Mānele, the boat.

MM: But someone used to come and give him the kaukau and stuff . . .

IP: Oh, let's see, wait. The boat used to bring the food. It must be Daniel [Kaopuiki, Sr.] them. Come to Mānele and bring all the food in, and the truck from Kō'eale would go down and bring all the food up.

MM: Up to the store.

IP: At the store. That's when the store was there. So, at their time, I think my tutu them would come up here. But before, oh, I don't know. But my mother said the food came in from down Mānele. So somebody must (have brought) them over. It must be Daniel them.

MM: Yeah.

IP: That was before we moved up [to Kō'eale]. When we moved up [in 1928], well, my tutu them was gone by then. [David Keliihananui died in 1925 at the age of eighty-five.] So, we had chickens. And then there were lots of papaya and orange trees, I remember, and that's about all we raised.

MM: Yeah.

IP: Mm hmm. But anyway, we worked in the potato patch [at Pālāwai] and helped. Besides that, we just played around. (Chuckles) There was not much to do because (it was a) small house. Like I said, it was divided just the living room and a little portion in the back with this wooden bunk with that mattress on. Just one window in the living room, and then (from) the entrance, the front door, (you'd) go right through to the back. Just two doors. And that's about all. That was a nice place. I loved that place. I enjoyed living there with them. My tutu kane was nice.

(Laughter)

IP: Very nice.

MM: How about at Kō'eale, when you folks moved there? Can you kind of describe how the area was? Let's start with your house, the house you folks moved into.

IP: That was big. Well, you lived in it. You know what it's like. [MM's family lived in the house once occupied by the Forbes family, then the Cocketts.]

(Laughter)

MM: Did you have indoor plumbing in that house when you moved in?

IP: Yes, when we moved up, that was something for us because it was indoor lua, and you didn't have to go outside. And they had a nice, big bedroom and a nice, big living room. We didn't have a fireplace. I think that fireplace was built after we left. And nice kitchen and everything. It was a nice, big house. But it got so cold during some winter months. It was so cold, Kō'ele at that time. Rebecca didn't tell you how cold it was before?

MM: Mm mm. Is it colder than now?

IP: Colder than now. I remember when we came from Keōmuku up there, and come December, it was so cold we had to use heavy jackets. So my dad had to go buy some thick, heavy sweaters, we'd order from Sears Roebuck or Montgomery Ward, at that time, and come to Maui and get it. And we had big overcoats. We'd go to school with these thick, heavy sweaters or overcoats. It was so cold.

MM: Was it just you folks dressed like that because you weren't ma'a or was everybody dressed like that?

IP: No, the others were dressed, too. The kids all had to come with heavy sweaters. But during the summertime, it was just like Keomuku. You know, it's nice and warm. It was just the wintertime [that] was so [cold]. But at Keomuku, of course, wintertime it wasn't that cold. It would be damp and all, but not cold, not like Kō'ele. Kō'ele was really cold. Just about all winter, every winter it was really cold. And rainy. The climate has changed a lot recently. At that time I was living [in Kō'ele] up to 1934, and then when I got married I moved here, down the city. But then, like in 1934, it was still cold.

MM: So along that house, did you have a garden up there, too?

IP: In our place, no, we didn't have any garden.

MM: So you folks mostly . . .

IP: We just kept chickens. We raised chickens, but no garden. But we had some fruit trees in the yard, like lime trees, and we had papayas. I think we had an orange tree, too, and mulberry. That's about what we had in our yard, but no vegetables. We got some of our vegetables from school. We planted. We had a garden at the school at that time.

MM: At the . . .

IP: At the Kō'ele [Grammar] School, by the golf course. When we'd go to school, we had to make a garden. We had a project. We'd go out and make our garden and plant vegetables. But at home we didn't have any garden, but some of the neighbors had. Like the Japanese and all, and they'd give us some.

MM: Did you know Mr. Munro at all?

IP: Yes, I did. They lived right next. They had that nice house right next. I remember James Munro.

MM: George?

IP: The old man is George Munro. James was the son.

MM: And then he had a nephew, Hector.

IP: Yes, Hector. I know who they are, but I'm not too familiar with them. But George Munro, he was a tall, nice man. We'd see him often because he would go to the office with my [father], I guess to check on the jobs. Then he left Lāna'i, and James Munro took over. Was that him?

MM: James Munro worked for Hawaiian Pine.

IP: Oh, he was working for Hawaiian Pine?

MM: Mm hmm.

IP: Oh. But George was with the Kō'ele [ranch].

MM: Ranching side.

IP: Kō'ele ranch.

MM: Yeah.

IP: And then they did away with the ranch. When was it they did away with the ranch, in '30. . . .

MM: No, I guess then [Ernest] Vredenburg came in [in 1935 as ranch manager].

IP: Oh, Vredenburg.

MM: Did your father work under Vredenburg?

IP: No, my father worked up until Vredenburg came, then my dad was pau with the company. Then they gave him a job as janitor for the administration office. So, when he finished up there, then he was pau with the company and then they put him down here and gave him this job here, and he did that until he retired.

MM: When was the [Ka Lōkahi O Ka Mālamalama Ho'omana Na'auao O Hawai'i] Church built?

IP: The church was built in 1930.

MM: Okay.

IP: When we came up, there was no church, but there was [James] Kauila.

MM: Mm hmm.

IP: And then, of course, a lot of the Hawaiian families. Manos and all of them. And they would have church services. I know we used to go down to Keomuku to [Ka Lanakila O Ka Mālamalama] Church. Then (when) we moved up, we didn't have any church so we would halāwai at home, have our services at home.

MM: When did your father become a minister?

IP: That was when they built the church in 19[30], I think they all got together because it was hard to go down to the Keomuku church. Or the ones up here decided they wanted to have a church and so they got together and talked to the [Hawaiian Pineapple] Company, and the company told them they could use that land to build a church there. So my dad and I think all the other Hawaiians there that wanted a church, built it.

MM: They built it up themselves?

IP: Yeah, they built it themselves. I'm sure they did. My brother Lloyd said they did.

MM: Do you know how they raised the money . . .

IP: No, I don't.

MM: You think Mary would know?

IP: I don't know if she would know. [Mary Kalawaia, IP's older sister, says the church was brought over from Maui.] She might say something else. I don't know. She might. But I know they built that church. The company said you can have that property there tax-free. And they built it and it was done in 1930. My father was ordained minister for the church. I have it written up. And Rev. [Andrew] Bright from Honolulu and Rev. [John] Matthew, they used to come over when the church was built, they'd come over and work with the people here.

MM: With your father?

IP: I guess to show them the ropes and help them with the work. So then they came over. Meantime, Kauila was kahuna pule, too, I think, for the Keomuku church. So anyway, Bright came over and they ordained my dad minister for this church.

MM: How did your dad become a minister?

IP: Well, this is what my mom told us. When they were down in Keomuku, my dad got real sick. He went to doctors and something was wrong with his leg. It couldn't heal. And so we had a Rev. Alexander [George], Alika, we called him. You've heard about him?

MM: What's his name, George Alexander or Alexander George?

IP: Gee. (MM chuckles.)

MM: But everybody called him "Alika."

IP: Alika. Anyway, he comes from Moloka'i, and he used to come over. Oh, I loved that old man. He was real nice. And he's blind, but he's sharp. He'd come and he would stay with us down Keomuku and we would take him around. My father strung a wire from the outhouse to the back porch. And (whenever) he would want to go to the bathroom, he would just go with his cane and (touch) the wire, (and he used it as a guide). And we didn't have to take him around. And he had a watch. And you can't fool him. He'd ask you what time, and we'd tell him a different time and he looks at his watch and he said that we were wrong. "It's certain, certain time."

"Gee, how can. He's blind. How can he see his watch." But he just feels, I think. I used to take him from Keomuku to Ka'a. And walk with him, and we'd talk, and he'll just follow you. You don't have to hold his hand, 'cause he'd just listen to your (voice). He'd come, I think, once a month, but I know he used to come to Keomuku for church. And my mom said he got to talk to my dad. My dad [at first] couldn't speak Hawaiian, you know, he didn't know Hawaiian.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

IP: So he came and talked to my dad and he told my dad that he can be cured if he joined the church. So, my dad said, "Okay." So he ho'oponopono and all that. Next time he'd come, they'll baptise him in the church. So, when he came the next time, my dad was getting better from all that pule. So my dad joined the church and he got well. And from that day, he said that he was going to learn about the Lord. And when he did, he only went in Hawaiian. He learned to read Hawaiian and, of course, my mom spoke Hawaiian. And he would speak with my mother in Hawaiian. So after that, it was only Hawaiian. And he would just read the Bible. He would read the Bible and he would go to church and it was all in Hawaiian. He kind of forgot his English. (Chuckles)

MM: So, when you were growing up, was Hawaiian or English the first language in your house?

IP: In our house, it was Hawaiian because my mom and dad spoke more Hawaiian. But, we didn't, because we were told at school that you don't speak Hawaiian. So, when we went home, "Oh, teacher say we speak Haole." (Chuckles) It was bad.

MM: Was it confusing for you?

IP: Well, no, because we could hear him talk and we went along and we heard. But the only thing, we didn't put it to practice and that's why I'm really ashamed of myself because I could have really known the Hawaiian language and speak it like my two sisters. Mary and Mikala, they're crack at it, they're good. And I could have been if I would have just used it. But, I didn't.

MM: How about your mother? Was she fluent in English?

(Telephone rings.)

IP: Not too, but she can read, you know, and she, . . .

(Telephone rings.)

IP: Well, she can speak the language.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

IP: Naturally, he was all for building the [Ka Lōkahi O Ka Mālamalama Ho'omana Na'auao O Hawai'i] Church [in Kō'ele]. And they all got together and built the church and then he became a minister. He was minister up until he couldn't go to church anymore. My mom was also not ordained for ministry, but liked to preach. [James] Kauila was minister, and my father, and my mom was my father's assistant. Then when my dad passed away, my mom took over.

MM: What year was that?

IP: My dad died in 1960 [1959], I think. Then my mom took over, and then when my mom passed away [in 1962], my sister Mary took over. Before my mom passed away, my sister Mary was ordained minister, and my mom was also. My sister Mary took over until now. So she's the only one.

MM: Have you been able to use the church?

IP: Yeah, we're using the church now. But before they [Castle & Cooke] moved it [in 1987 to make way for the hotel, The Lodge at Kō'ele], we didn't go. And then they moved it. October 23, [1988], we re-dedicated the church. They said we could go ahead and have the dedication, and we did. That was on a Sunday, and Monday, Moana's [IP's daughter] husband went to work, and they told them that we couldn't use the church, because we had to have permission to use the building. Occupancy or something.

MM: Oh, yeah, certificate of occupancy.

IP: They said we had to have that, and if we didn't, everything might stop and that they would get into trouble or something. That's what we heard. So, we thought, well, gee, we better not go, we don't want trouble. So we didn't go. But after waiting and waiting, we figured we'd get this permit. But we didn't get anything. Nobody said anything so I went to [Vice President/General Manager of Lāna'i

Company, Inc.] Bob Oda and I asked him. I said, "What's holding us up from using the church? Everything's done except for the connection for the electricity." And we don't need that. We don't need the place to be landscaped to go to church. The heck with all that, you know. We want to get to the church.

So he said, "Oh, haven't you folks been using the church?"

I said, "Not after the dedication." And of course Moana and her husband [wanted to get] married in the church.

So, I talked to Bob Oda, he said, "Yes, you folks can have your wedding in the church." So we did. And then after that we thought we would wait until we got this okay. We didn't get it and I talked to Bob Oda, and Bob said he doesn't see why we can't go. He said, "You folks been using the church?"

I said, "Not right after the dedication."

So we waited again and nothing. So we said, "Heck, let's go." So we went. And we said that for Christmas we were going to have service, and we went Christmas Day. We had service and we've been having service up till now. We figure we'd just go and if they don't like it, they can just come and tell us that.

MM: Give it to you in writing.

IP: Give it to us in writing.

MM: You know the original building where you folks was first set?

IP: That house---that church?

MM: That wasn't the only building, right? There was a church hall next to it?

IP: Yes, there was a church hall and they knocked it down. We asked to have another hall because we wanted a hall. You know, when you have Sunday school for the kids. When you have a little get-together, you have a place. And we had a hall, we had stove, and we had sink, and we had refrigerator. But when I came back they were rusted, so I got rid of it and we were going to put new ones in when they told us they were going to move the church, so we didn't. So now, they have that little building there, and they say that's our little hall. It's our office. We don't want a office, we want a hall. So, anyway, that's what we got and that's all they're going to give us. But we have bigger bathrooms, bigger than mine, nicer than mine. So, and what else?

(Laughter)

MM: Okay.



IP: So now we go to church. We're going to stay there and we're going to have services until they tell us.

MM: Yeah. So going back to the '30s at Kō'e'ele, did you hold a lot of activities at that church? You know for holidays or special occasions.

IP: Well, you know, our church, we don't have all that. Like Easter, it's not big like at the other churches. They have a special Palm something. Our church does not. We just have the regular, except for Christmas. And then, of course, three times a year we have get-together with the, what do you call that? Not the 'Aha Pae 'Āina [statewide convention usually held on the Big Island. Lit., meeting of the Islands]. Pae 'Āina is the convention. And that's once a year. And once we had here the meetings ['Aha Moku Puni: island-wide convention]. And then we get together and we have different groups sing songs ['aha mele]. (Poki'i pa'a: small children; 'ōpio pa'a: teens/young adults; makua papa: elders; papa kahuna pule: ministers; papa 'ohana: family groups.)

MM: Like a song contest.

IP: Tūtū Hannah [Richardson's church] still have that. They have that. We don't because there's just four of us going to church, you know. Just four of us. It's sad because Tūtū Hannah them and all of Kauila them [were at] first all in that church. That's why now they call this the Cockett church. But it isn't the Cockett church. It was for all the people at the ranch. The Kauilas, Kaopuikis, and Manos and everybody. But then [there was a] disagreement.

MM: I guess they chose to stay down Keōmuku and . . .

IP: And a little disagreement on things. I think that's really what's wrong, and then they wanted to be by themselves and have their way. So it's sad, really sad. But, we go to church, just four of us. Way back, we used to look forward to when we have that Sunday school. Ku--no [referring to Hoike Kula Kāpaki], I can't remember. Anyway, we have that and then the different groups would come and they have their songs, and then we have like a contest. And that's about the biggest thing that we have at the church. And I think that's three times a year. And then of course the special Christmas services that we have, but it's just like the regular one, but we have service for that. But, Easter and all this other kind [of special service] that these churches have, we don't.

MM: So it was pretty simple, then.

IP: Simple, it's very simple. Even like today, it's simple but I think it's good if you get into a little more, like maybe at Easter have a little something. But that's the way the church rules are and we have to go by it. But it's simple, it's very simple, nothing much.

MM: So, you stayed up at Kō'e'ele until you got married?

IP: Yes, stayed up there and stayed with the family until I met Dick, my husband, (chuckles) then I decided to get married. Actually, because I thought I'd get more outside than home. You know, it's so strict, the family.

MM: Your family was strict?

IP: My family, we were so strict we couldn't go out and play with other kids. We would go, but not every day. Like the other kids would get together and would just have fun. But we couldn't . . .

MM: Did you folks participate up by the rec hall and things like that? Did you folks go up there and play?

IP: Ah, no.

MM: You mainly stayed by yourself?

IP: Mm hmm. You mean Kō'ele?

MM: At Kō'ele.

IP: No, we didn't go. I don't know why, but my mom said that we're supposed to be home, you know. We do our chores and we stay home. We don't bother anybody. And so, the only time we got to meet the kids is maybe Saturdays after we get through with our chores, we can maybe go out and play with them until a certain time, then we had to be home. And we couldn't go to the movie with the kids. The kids were all free to go and we just couldn't. And if there was something special, a special movie that was extra good, we had to beg and my dad would go with us, would take us. But, other than that, we couldn't.

MM: Was he more strict with the girls than he was with the boys?

IP: Well, I guess so because it was just me and my brother, Lloyd, and Mary. So, I wouldn't say. Well, maybe, you know how boys just take off whether the parents said yes or no, they would disappear.

MM: Because I heard Uncle Lloyd was kolohe. (Chuckles)

IP: Yeah, he'd just disappear. But us, we would just say, "Oh, I want to go there."

"No, you cannot go."

So, we'd go home and watch the kids through our fence. The place was fenced, you know, that was there when we moved. So we'd stay and just from the fence watch Hannah and (chuckles) all the other kids playing. We couldn't go out. That's why I figured, oh, heck, because I met Dick, I may as well get married and I'll be free, and do what I want. But, forget it, I should have been home. I think I would have been . . .

MM: So when did you get married?

IP: I got married in 1934.

MM: And you went to Lāna'i City [to live]?

IP: And I stayed there, yes. Dick came from Pā'auhau, Hawai'i. He came here to work in the pineapple fields. His brother came here to work and so he came to work and he liked it. He stayed with his brother. And then I met him. I think he came in the '30s.

MM: And then after you got married, did you move to this house?

IP: No, when we got married, we had a small house right up there by where Aunty Mary lives. By Nani Street. That's where I lived, in the back there. And then later on, let's see, in 1938, I think, I moved into that house, right where Eugenio is now. You know Kuulei?

MM: Yeah.

IP: Well, right back of Kuulei.

MM: Oh, okay. Right off Lāna'i Avenue then.

IP: Yeah, that was right back of Kuulei. But, of course, they kind of took the house away and fixed it up. I lived back of there and then in 1940, I moved here. Nineteen-forty we moved here and I've been here all this time.

MM: How different was it to live here than Kō'ele?

IP: Ah, it's okay. I like Kō'ele better. I like Kō'ele because I like the hills and when you're up there you can see the ocean and those mountains down that north end side. Over here it's so cooped up like I'm in a hole. You can't see much.

MM: The houses are too close together?

IP: Well, up, over there Kō'ele the houses were close together. We used to live in that house. You folks lived in that house too. Well, in the back, was like a little apartment.

MM: It was a duplex or something.

IP: Yes, duplex. And then they had their little bath, then they go out to the little washhouse in the back. And they were all that way. And I think they must, let's see, how many of them? That was all gone when you came here, yeah?

MM: Yeah.

IP: Were you born here?

MM: Yes.

IP: Oh. But I don't mind the houses being close together because, I mean, it's only this side. But I like it. It seemed cooler up there and you're free, it's open. I'd rather go up there and live there if I can.

MM: You know, one of the things that I think you mentioned the last time was in the '40s, I think, or in the '50s, you worked at a daycare center?

IP: Yes, I think I started in 1936, that was with the [Hawaiian Pineapple] Company.

MM: Was that a new concept or something? Was that, you know, you hear about daycare centers being developed now. But back then in the '30s, why did they have daycare centers?

IP: I don't know. Well, maybe so that the company would get the kids to a place like that because the parents went to work.

MM: Both the mother and the father worked?

IP: Yes, it was through the company, and so I worked there and they would have free lunches.

MM: How old were the children?

IP: They started from four, five, six. And they would get their milk and their good lunch, you know, rice and meat. So we had it down at the [Lāna'i] Baptist Church, used to be.

MM: And how long a day was it? How early was it?

IP: It was half a day. It was just from 8:30 to 12:00, we would have that. And the bus, they would have the bus. . . .

MM: To go pick up the kids?

IP: To go pick up the children. They would come over and get me when I was down that side, pick me up, and then we'd go right around the city and get all the kids. And then we'd go to school.

MM: Oh, did the parents have to pay for this?

IP: Were all free.

MM: Oh, my goodness. Amazing.

IP: All free. That's why I say, it was so nice. The parents didn't have to. Everything was furnished. Papers, pencils, colors. Everything was furnished. I worked from '36 and then when I had Moana, I stayed home for a year and then I went back to work. Then

I had Momi, and I was home for another year, and then I went back and I worked until 1957, I think, when the company did away with the daycare center. I'm not sure what year. I think the company was still taking care of it, but we didn't have lunch. When we had the lunch was before the union [International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union] came in. But when the union came in [1946], everything went. We were getting things free. Like water was free, and we were paying very cheap for electricity or for kerosene. We got a lot of things for a song. But when the union came in we lost all of that. Well, anyway, they took over and I worked under them up until '57. That's when we closed altogether. In the meantime, there was Mrs. Fraser. Mr. [Dexter] Fraser was then the [superintendent of Hawaiian Pineapple Company's Lāna'i Plantation]. Well, she helped with the preschool. We ran the school, but afterwards she dropped out. And then they closed it altogether. Didn't have anything more to do with the preschool. I don't know if they had anything after that.

I didn't have anything to do. They closed that and that was it. I thought about having one for myself, you know, getting so many kids over here because I had this area. But then it's too much red tape in it and, you know, responsibility, kids, and some of the parents weren't too nice, too. So, I thought, better not. Later on, that's why I had to go to Honolulu and work because there was nothing here for me.

MM: So when did you go?

IP: I had my doughnut shop. I opened up a doughnut shop.

MM: In Honolulu?

IP: Here.

MM: Oh, here?

IP: Right here. When the preschool, daycare center closed--before they closed--I opened up a doughnut shop. Right down in that little garage, I had my shop and had doughnuts and pies and pastries.

MM: Right out here?

IP: Yeah.

MM: Oh, my goodness.

IP: In the back there.

MM: What was it called?

IP: Irene's Doughnut Kitchen. (MM chuckles.) It was good.

MM: And how long were you open?

IP: Oh, what do you mean, hours or the years?

MM: No, how many years.

IP: Well, let's see, '51, I think, '51 to '57.

MM: Gee, that's interesting.

IP: I enjoyed it. I had that special doughnut machine, greaseless doughnuts, it's called. Just like a waffle iron. And you just put your batter in and close it. And in about five minutes it's done. You can make dozens of it. So, I used to have that and I'd sell it to Richard's [Shopping Center]. And when we'd have blood donation time over here, I used to give some to the hospital. You know, donate some doughnuts. Sometimes they'd buy it, but I'd donate a little more. Then I made pies for people to order and all that. Just on orders I'd make. And bake the cakes. When I came back, I thought about going into it again because I have the place.

MM: So, when did you move away?

IP: I left in 1959.

MM: And then when did you come back?

IP: And came home 1980.

MM: Was it real hard for you being very young?

IP: Yes, it was hard because I wasn't working. When I was working for the preschool, I was only getting eighty dollars a month and I had the two children. And Dick passed away in 1950, so I had to ask for some aid through welfare and they told me to go out and work. And then I told them, well, I had my parents to care for because my father was paralyzed. It was after, in '56, I think, he was paralyzed. And he was home there [Lāna'i City], but it was hard for him so I had him (and Mother) move down and they stayed with me. So, they were staying with me and I was working at the preschool yet and I had my doughnut shop. Then when they closed the preschool, I had only the doughnut shop. It was good, but at the time there weren't too many people. It was the same people and you know how Lāna'i is, sometimes they get tired of eating the same things. So, it's a slow thing. It's not a big profit. But I was able to continue. I wasn't in the red. I was doing all right. But it was too slow. I couldn't make a living on that. And with just fifty dollars from the social security, they told me fifty dollars to raise my children. And then now, when you think how much they get, the kids get \$120-something dollars per child. God, I said, if I had that that time I wouldn't have to worry. But anyway, no regrets.

MM: Where'd you move? You moved to Honolulu?

IP: No, I went to the Mainland first. I went to visit Moana and Momi. They were both in the service on the Mainland. So, I went there and I worked one year down in the St. Francis Hospital in Colorado Springs. And then my dad passed away so I came home. Then my mother wasn't too well, so I thought I'd better stay close to home. So, there wasn't anything here. I wasn't going into the pineapple field. I [once] worked in the pineapple field for three months in summer. I couldn't. I'd come home and my foot would be swollen every day and I had to soak them in hot, salt water or whatever and go back. And every day like that, it was too much. I thought I was stupid, too. (Chuckles)

So, I figured, well, that was too much for me and so I went to Honolulu, instead of going to the Mainland. So far, you know. Here, I can come home and visit Mama and so I went to Honolulu and got a job at the Moana Hotel, 1959, I started working. I was working in the pantry, making sandwiches and, you know. I worked with the [Moana] Surfrider [Hotel]. It's the same thing with the Moana, but the Surfrider. And then I went to the Moana for the luncheon sandwich bar, and I worked there. And worked in the kitchen as pantry, making salads and all. I worked there until 1978, then I decided I want to quit. That was enough work. (Laughs) I was getting tired. Things were getting too hectic. Guys give you more work. They were getting kind of tight. Things were not too good then. So I decided I was getting too tired. Time to retire and come home. So I could hardly wait to come home. There were times in Honolulu, I wasn't happy there. I worked because I had to (chuckles) stay there because there was nothing here. But when I retired, I was coming home. And I came home and then in 1981, '82, I worked part-time at the First Federal [Savings and Loan], just cleaning. And I had something to do, you know.

MM: And then so now you're more active with your weaving and stuff?

IP: And now, then I decided I think I want to go and learn to weave hats with Tutu Mahoe [Rebecca Kauila Benenua]. I always wanted to learn to weave. We used to make fans when we were kids for the church. But, I wanted to learn to make hats. Really wanted that and so, we started. We had that Alu Like program over here?

MM: Mm hmm.

IP: I told Sol about doing some lau hala work and he said, "Oh, good idea." So we went down Keomuku and got some. He talked with Tutu Mahoe and she said fine, she would come and teach us. So we went down and got some lau hala and came back and we all made our own box, you know, what do you call that. Anyway, for the shape of our head. We made our own and then Tutu Mahoe came and she taught us how to weave. But we started with the harder things. We should have started with easy, . . .

MM: With fans. (Chuckles)



IP: . . . with fans or with little mats, you know.

MM: Placemats.

IP: The big weaves, you know. The hat was a fine weave. I think it's only about one-fourth, I think.

MM: One-fourth, quarter inch?

IP: It's quarter inch or something, you know.

MM: Or even wastebaskets. (Chuckles)

IP: Yes, even wastebaskets like that one there. That was a simple one to do, but we didn't, we went into the hat, and oh, was that something. But, we learned to do it, and so, while I was working, I said, "Gee, I don't have enough time. I'd like to be home where I can get to Tutu Mahoe and sit down and work." So, I decided to quit (my job). But I didn't go right away with Tutu to learn because she was not feeling too well. Then it was just last year I started to work with her with lau hala, you know, making hats. So she would start the piko, and I would bring it home and do the crown, and the rim, and then she would end it up. So, I think I did three for her. And we were going to save that because people ordered and then when they pay us, we were going to put it aside, so we can go to this next lau hala weaving class that they are having in Hawai'i. And it's [taught by] Auntie Minnie Kaawaloa. She's a weaver, too, and she's having a workshop in Hilo, in Kalapana, February 10th, 11th, and 12th. So Tutu Mahoe and I were planning to go to that, so I hope she's feeling well that we can go.

MM: I think she needs to go.

IP: She does. She does need to go. That's why I was telling her, "You take care of yourself so we can go and get away." Actually, you know what really I'd like to do for her is--oh, just before I retired, I would take her some weekends, Friday, Saturday, and we'd come home Sunday. We'd go down to her place down there because she was . . .

MM: Maunalei side?

IP: Yes, she was good [i.e., well] at that time. And, we would go and spend the night down there. We'd sit and weave and talk, you know. But then she got a little too sick, and so we couldn't go back again. And I haven't gone back, because of the road, too, that we couldn't go. And then with her condition, I'm kind of afraid to take her down and just be by ourselves when there's no telephone, you know. Otherwise, like Moana is here with me now, and it'd be just simple. We can go down and spend a week or four days, you know. I'd be willing to take her and go down and stay with her. And she wants to. You know, she wants to go down. I think, healthwise, she would be better off down there. Over here is too

much strain for her with all the family. There's too much in the house to begin with.

MM: How do you feel about all the changes that are happening now?

IP: Here?

MM: Mm hmm.

IP: It's not bothering me. It doesn't bother me. I like the change, the hotel and all. I think it's good for us. There's going to be at least something different, you know. We can see that little difference than just plain Lana'i. That's the way I feel, but some people, I don't think they like it. I'd like to see the old ranch, though. You know, just the way it was. But, actually, I think it's really nice. You go up there and look, beautiful hotel right up there. But you can just picture, oh, before, the house was here, we were here. You can see that and then now you see this. I like it. So, and like the Manele one [hotel], I like all the changes, but I hope they don't cut us off from anything, especially down there [Manele]. Up here, it's all right because we don't use the places. We just go Keomuku and all that. But down Manele is, the hotel down that side. Even that, the hotel there it's all right, fine. But, not to cut us off from using the beach. You know, that we cannot camp there, or we cannot go into the place. That's the only thing that kind of worries me. But, maybe not. Maybe we won't lose it. So far, we can go and we can enjoy. So, I think it's all right. What do you think? About the changes?

MM: I think a lot of change is happening at one time. You know I think that . . .

IP: Fast? Too fast?

MM: Real fast. (Chuckles)

IP: Yeah, real fast. Just here, here.

MM: But I just hope they don't lose the specialness. You know there's---Lana'i cannot be like Kaanapali or all those other big places. You know, Lana'i is different. Yeah, Lana'i has red dirt. (Chuckles)

IP: Oh, that's right. Right, Lana'i is different.

MM: Lana'i, you get dirty.

IP: You get dirty and you enjoy it. I can go Keomuku and get all dirty. (Chuckles)

MM: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

IP: But it's all right.

MM: Okay, Aunty. Aunty Irene. Thank you so much. I think that's it.

IP: I hope it helped you a little bit.

MM: Oh, definitely. (Chuckles)

END OF INTERVIEW

# **LĀNA'I RANCH**

## **The People of Kō'ele and Keōmuku**

**VOLUME I**

**Center for Oral History  
Social Science Research Institute  
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